

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: October 10, 2013

Agenda Item: Marias River Land Exchange Proposal Endorsement

Division: Fish and Wildlife

Action Needed: Preliminary Approval

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

On February 5, 2013 FWP met with John Brekke, dba Marias River Bird Preserve, LLC, to discuss a potential land exchange. Mr. Brekke owns several parcels of land immediately adjacent to the Marias River Wildlife Management Area. Mr. Brekke currently has an access easement with another landowner to access his property as the existing county road does not extend to his property. However, access to the largest portion of Mr. Brekke's property is most direct by crossing a portion of the Marias River WMA known as the Black Bank. FWP has allowed Mr. Brekke to cross the WMA without restriction to access this portion of his property. Mr. Brekke wishes to further develop his property but lack of secure access precludes him from moving forward.

FWP and Mr. Brekke came to a proposed land exchange agreement. FWP proposed to transfer the parcel known as the Black Bank to Mr. Brekke to meet his need for secure access. In addition, FWP would transfer to Mr. Brekke approximately 15.9 acres immediately adjacent to his property. Both parcels are south of the Marias River (see map). The total acreage transferred to Mr. Brekke is approximately 35.9 acres. In exchange, Mr. Brekke would transfer 76.7 acres of important wildlife habitat adjacent to the WMA to FWP, extend his access agreement with the adjacent landowner to FWP, and grant FWP administrative access to the Marias River WMA across his property.

Public Involvement Process & Results

To date there has been no public involvement. Should this proposal move forward, public involvement would be consistent with FWP land projects.

Alternatives and Analysis

- 1) Pursue the possibility of a land exchange in which FWP would transfer approximately 35.9 acres to John Brekke. Mr. Brekke would transfer to FWP approximately 76.7 acres, extend an existing access agreement to FWP, and grant administrative access across his property.
- 2) Not pursue a land exchange. FWP would lose an opportunity to conserve important riparian habitat adjacent to the WMA, as well as the opportunity to gain administrative access to this portion of the WMA.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends that the Commission endorse this proposal to conduct further negotiations, public review, and analysis.

Proposed Motion

I move the Commission provide preliminary approval of the Marias River WMA exchange with Mr. Brekke, allowing FWP to conduct further negotiations, public review, and analysis.